

THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 1905.

A DOCTOR'S VIEW OF THE EAST.

The Other Side of the Lantern. By Sir Frederick Treves, Bart. Pp. xvi + 424. (London: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1905.) Price 12s. net.

AN admirable book; a book written in terse and epigrammatic style, as full of cleverness as anything written by Kipling, and intensely interesting as illustrative of the first impressions conveyed to a highly trained and observant mind by the familiar and superficial details of eastern life. But there is nothing deeper in the book than first impressions, and it was perhaps inevitable that to the student of human nature under those aspects of sorrow and suffering which shadow the sick bed and the hospital, those first impressions should be tinged with the pathos and sadness rather than with the brightness and fulness of the east, and that the general tone of the book should be almost pessimistic. It is as if the lantern had proved to be no better than a common "bull's eye," with nothing on the far side but deep shadow and the policeman. Not that the book is wanting in humour by any means. On the contrary, some of the quaint outlines of men and things sketched in by the artist's hand are as full of humour as anything drawn by Phil May; but it is the grim humour of the man who complained in South Africa of the "plague of women and flies" rather than that of the ordinary holiday tourist infected with the light and sunshine of the eastern world.

The fascination of the book lies in the strength of it, and its appeal to ordinary experience. What Sir Frederick Treves describes with a few powerful and graphic touches of the pen is what we all know and have seen thousands of times for ourselves, and it is the reproduction of our own unwritten (and perhaps unrecognised) sensations that gives such pleasure to the understanding. The keen power of observation possessed by men who are trained by medical experience to judge character by the small superficial details of every-day action is sometimes almost uncanny to those who have eyes to see but see not, passing from country to country well wrapped up in a layer of self-satisfied insularity, regarding the changeful world of human existence as a sort of variety show with no reality at the back of it. Occasionally, no doubt, Sir Frederick permits an artistic fancy to introduce embellishments into the arena of actual observation; but where this occurs one cannot but recognise that he shares with Turner the great faculty of rendering his picture all the more truthful in realising the impression which he seeks to convey.

From the very start at Tilbury the author displays a powerful conception of all those minor features of the voyage eastward which are the framework and making of the voyager's daily experience. He begins with his fellow passengers:—"As an arena for the display of the resources of selfishness a departing ship has great advantages," and follows this up with a record of the mean little stratagems in which

travellers will permit themselves to indulge on such occasions, and (it should be fairly admitted) on such occasions only. If there was anything of the usual good fellowship and interchange of little kindnesses which usually distinguishes the fellow voyagers of a P. and O. ship (many of whom are necessarily well acquainted with each other), Sir Frederick does not seem to have remarked them. He is impressed with the aspect of selfishness only. He is deeply interested in Gibraltar (the Rock of the past rather than of the present); charmed with the vision of Crete; inclined to relieve Port Said from the weight of universal anathema with which it is invested; and disappointed with India. At least, so one gathers from his book. He is profoundly impressed with the multitudes of India, and with the melancholy which tinges their whole existence. The truth is that the multitudes would not so much signify if they were equally distributed over the whole continent; and a comparison with France in the matter of population is ineffective for the reason that France much wants more people than she possesses. It is, however, the growing of the multitudes (checked even though it be by periodic famines over vast areas) that affords most serious consideration to Indian administrators.

The general prevalence of an atmosphere of melancholy pervading native life in India is real enough, and it is this which tends greatly to discount the chequered pleasures of European existence in that country. For it is an undoubted fact that in spite of isolation and exile in this "land of regrets" (the land of "grim extremes" Sir Frederick calls it), and the absence of so much that makes life worth living under European skies, life in India has more in it of pleasure than of pain. There are few who leave India quite of their own free will, and many who would gladly end their days there were it not for the disjoining of all ties of friendship by the departure to England of those whom they know best and love best in their own social circle.

Sir Frederick (perhaps naturally) appears to associate melancholy with misery. The association is by no means true of India whatever it may be in other lands; nor does he, with all his profound knowledge of human nature and the effect of environment and occupation thereon, quite appreciate the point of view from which the native looks at the conditions of his own existence. For instance, he finds in the Pahári (the hill men of the Himalayas) a class of people condemned to work as beasts of burden all their lives. Visiting Simla in the "off" season, he finds these men of the hills pervading the Tibet road, toiling painfully towards the Simla market loaded with planks of sawn wood. "They move slowly and they walk in single file, and when the path is narrow they must move sideways. In one day I met no less than fifty creeping wretches in this inhuman procession . . . if there were but a transverse beam to the plank, each one of these bent men might be carrying his own cross to a far-off place of crucifixion." If the author had waited until the "wretches" had stacked their planks for the evening, lit their fires for cooking, and gathered round for the day's ending, he would have

found no cheerier, happier hearted folk on the face of the earth than they. There is nothing melancholy about the Pahári. It is perhaps extraordinary that any people who are content (for there is no necessity in this case) to take the place of beasts of burden should be so absolutely unaware of the depth of their own miserable degradation. But so it is, and they would no more thank Sir Frederick for drawing them as central figures in a picture of a "circle in Purgatory" than would the bare-backed inhabitants of the bazaar thank the good missionary for calling them indecent. If he tried to turn a Pahári into a hospital orderly, and to wean him from his mountains and his planks, the contract would not last for a week!

But it is necessarily only with the outward aspect of things Indian that the casual traveller can possibly deal, and it is the freshness and vigour of Sir Frederick's descriptions of native life, his love of colour and nature, that make the charm of his book. Can anything be better than his description of the small shopkeeper of the bazaar? He "lives in the street *coram populo*, and his inner life is generously laid open to the public gaze. In the morning he may think well to wash himself in front of his shop, and to clean his teeth with a stick while he crouches amongst his goods and spits into the lane. He sits on the ground in the open to have his head shaved and watches the flight of the barber's razor by means of a hand glass. The barber squats in front of him and from time to time whets his blade upon his naked leg. The shopkeeper will change his clothes before the eyes of the world when so moved. He also eats in the open, and after the meal he washes his mouth with ostentatious publicity and empties his bowl into the road."

In moving amongst the historical cities of India and in describing them in detail there is, of course, a danger of treading on the skirts of the guide book. Sir Frederick only escapes the peril by the strength and beauty of his descriptions of these relics of the past and his keen appreciation of the stories that these stones can tell; his power of investing palaces and forts with all the movement and glitter, the coming and going, of past races of kings, making these old walls live once more under the light of an India which shall never be again. It is all delightful reading, and the stirring India of Sir Frederick's imaginings owns an enchantment which is wanting in the shadowed India of his latter day observation. There is not much said about Calcutta. The flavour of the place, that "essence of corruption which has rotted for a second time" (Kipling), seems to have been too much for the author; and yet we know that Calcutta is reckoned (statistically, at least) to be one of the wholesomest cities of the world, even when judged by the European standard.

Passing from India to Burma one is not surprised at the air of relief which pervades his book when dealing with that bright and laughter-loving land. Not even the stern critic of woman's mission in camp and hospital can resist the fascination of the Burmese coquette; and his description of Burma and Ceylon (where, *en passant*, the eminent surgeon was intro-

duced to the devil of appendicitis and found him "unreasonably noisy") includes the best and brightest chapter in the book.

China falls again within the shadows cast by the far side of the lantern. The "nightmare city of Canton," where "such peace as is to be found in the city lies only on the green hill side without the walls, where the dead are sleeping," gives the key note of the almost morbid view of Chinese social existence which is taken by the author; and yet throughout his story of China and Japan (which country he also finds somewhat disappointing) there is the same brilliancy of description, the same fertile power of supplying precisely the right touch that is required to complete the sketch, that marks the work as original from beginning to end. It is almost Kiplingesque (to coin a word) in its epigrammatic summary of the usually complicated view of eastern humanity and its environment. It is the best book of travel that has been written for years; and yet when one lays it down regretfully (regretfully because it has come to an end), a feeling of thankfulness steals over one that the endless procession of human life and all the sweet variety of nature in the east is usually ranged for view before our eyes untinted by the medium of medical spectacles. T. H. H.

A BOOK ON MUSEUMS.

Museums, their History and their Use; with a Bibliography and List of Museums in the United Kingdom. By D. Murray. 3 Vols. Vol. i., pp. xv+339; vol. ii., pp. xiii+339; vol. iii., pp. 363. (Glasgow: MacLehose and Sons, 1904.) Price 32s. net.

WE have read the text of the first volume of this work (the second and third are devoted to bibliography, &c.) from title-page to index with the greatest pleasure and satisfaction, and can therefore recommend it to the best attention of those interested in the history and progress of museums. The book itself offers an illustration of an evolution somewhat similar to that of many of those institutions, for it is based on an address delivered by the author, in his capacity as president, to the Glasgow Archæological Society so long ago as the winter of 1897, and from this slender foundation it has gradually grown to its present dimensions. Much of the original address appears to remain in the final chapter of the text, where we find the author comparing the state of museums in 1897 to what it was half a century earlier, and what he presumes it will be in the future.

The work, which claims to be the first really full and approximately complete account of museum history in general, is confessedly written from the standpoint of an archæologist rather than of a naturalist; and it is none the worse for this, although, as we shall point out, there are a few instances where it would have been well had the author taken counsel with his zoological colleagues. Before proceeding to a brief notice of some of the leading features of the text, it may be well to mention that the list of museums in the British Islands is based on the one prepared by the Museums Association in 1887, and